

The conference broke up, my father retired with the King, and desired me to wait for him in the hall. I was alone. I was excited. I felt the triumph of success. I felt that I had done a great action. I felt all my energies. I walked up and down the hall in a frenzy of ambition, and I thirsted for action. There seemed to be no achievement of which I was not capable, and of which I was not ambitious. In imagination I shook thrones and founded empires. I felt myself a being born to breathe in an atmosphere of revolution.

My father came not. Time wore away, and the day died. It was one of those stern, sublime sunsets, which is almost the only appearance in the north in which nature enchanted me. I stood at the window, gazing on the burnished masses that for a moment were suspended in their fleeting and capricious beauty on the far horizon. I turned aside and looked at the rich trees suffused with the crimson light, and ever and anon irradiated by the dying shoots of a golden ray. The deer were stealing home to their bowers, and I watched them till their glancing forms gradually lost their lustre in the declining twilight. The glory had now departed, and all grew dim. A solitary star alone was shining in the grey sky, a bright and solitary star.

And as I gazed upon the sunset, and the star, and the dim beauties of the coming eve, my mind grew calm, and all the bravery of my late reverie passed away. And I felt indeed a disgust for all the worldliness on which I had been late pondering. And there arose in my mind a desire to create things beautiful as that golden sun and that glittering star.

I heard my name. The hall was now darkened. In the distance stood my father. I joined him. He placed his arm affectionately in mine, and said to me, 'My son, you will be Prime Minister of . . . ; perhaps something greater.'¹

A short time before, a fresh encounter with a lady who had been the object of a boyish passion had reawakened the better feelings of the young egoist and made him recoil in disgust from the thought of his present life. The latent poetry of his being revived; he took up his pen and, in the sudden rush of inspiration, produced in seven days a novel which was published anonymously under the title of *Mamtein*. The narrative

¹ Pt. II. ch. 13.

